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ABSTRACT

The components of a competency-based English curriculum, grades K-12, are described, taking into account competencies at various levels rather than grades. The content areas at each level include listening, speaking, reading, writing, language, literature, and media. An explanation is provided at each stage of development for: needs assessment; selection and description of concepts and skills; development of concept and skill objectives; development of test items for concept and skill objectives; development of materials and activities for teaching objectives; development of individualized, learning activity packets which include objectives, a pretest, learning activities for each objective, and a posttest; formative evaluation and revision of learning activity packets for maximum student attainment of objectives; and development of the sequence and scope of the curriculum at each of the levels. (HOD)

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A Development Cycle for a Competency Based English Curriculum, Grades K-12

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The rapid economic, social, and political changes of the decade of the 70's have placed strains and stresses on the "traditional" elementary and secondary school English curriculum and English teachers. In an age which demands advanced literacy skills for survival of even the truck driver and the fireman, English teachers in the schools are accountable to more than the principal of their school and the district superintendent. Teachers of English are responsible to the American society which hires them to do a job. This present American society has expectations for the upcoming generation. Responsible adult members of this society expect the entering members of the society to be competent in carrying out certain carefully delineated behaviors and thoughts which satisfy the needs of the society. In developing an English curriculum, K-12, for the children and adolescents of an American school district, teachers must consider: (1) their accountability to the society which hires them and pays their salaries; (2) the needs and expectations of that society; (3) the carefully stated English and reading objectives determined to meet these needs, and (4) the attained and developing English and reading competencies of the children and students as they progress from level to level in an instructional system.

In the development of an instructional system in English and reading, elementary and secondary, the children and students are perceived as developing humans with an expanding repetoire of cognitive and behavioral abilities and experiences. This stance is the first break from tradition since developmentally, children and students progress from level to level of competency, rather than from grade to grade. Levels, however, encompass grades as follows:

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Level 1,	Grades K-2,	Ages 5-7	Ego-centric cognitive
Level 11,	Grades 3-4,	Ages 8-9	and behavioral ability
Level 111,	Grades 5-6,	Ages 10-11	Concrete cognitive and
Level 1V,	Grades 7-8,	Ages 12-13	behavioral ability
Level V,	Grades 9-10,	Ages 14-15	Abstract cognitive and
Level V1,	Grades 11-12,	Ages 16-17	behavioral ability

At each level, the content areas include: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, (4) writing, (5) language, (6) literature, and (7) media. Certainly, not all of the curriculum fit under the format of a competency based English curriculum, but an attempt at a competency based English curriculum at each level leads to better understanding of ways of assuring students' competence in English and reading performance. The developmental stages (Figure 1) to be encountered over a period of two or more years include: (1) needs assessment; (2) selection and description of concepts and skills to be developed at each level; (3) development of concept and skill objectives; (4) development of test items for concept and skill objectives; (5) development of materials and activities for teaching objectives; (6) development of individualized, learning activity packets which include (a) objectives, (b) pretest, (c) learning activities for each objective, and (d) posttest; (7) formative evaluation and revision of Learning Activity Packets for maximum student attainment of objectives; (8) development of the sequence and scope of a Competency Based English Curriculum at Levels 1, 11, 111, 1V, V, and V1. Each of these developmental stages requires careful explanation and deliberation.

Needs Assessment - The needs assessment is the first and most critical stage in the development of a competency based English curriculum, K-12. The needs assessment relies on input information from the following sources: (1) knowledge of students' future needs in school, society, and culture; (2) knowledge available from the psychology and sociology of learning; (3) knowledge from (a) research, (b) curriculum theory, and (c) teachers of English and communication. The following is a sample of a few English and reading needs selected from a larger list:

Level 1, Grades K-2: The child needs to:

1. Follow simple auditory directions.
2. Develop vocabulary.

3. Discriminate sounds of vowels and consonants.
4. Recite and recognize the alphabet, capital and small letters, printed and cursive.
5. Associate sounds with letter clusters.
6. Write from left to right and top to bottom.
7. Form printed and cursive letters and numbers.
8. Recognize -s as plural or person sign.
9. Write declarative and question sentences.
10. Read words and sentences written for Level I with a 70-80% level of comprehension. (This need appears for each Level.)

Level II, Grades 3-4: The child needs to:

1. Demonstrate a 70% performance level on objectives stated for proceding level (Level I).
2. Discuss informally with his classmates.
3. Paraphrase or answer questions on oral reports and presentations.
4. Write sentences, simple paragraphs, and letters.
5. Spell and use words found in reading materials.
6. Recognize dialects of people studied in U.S.A. geography lessons.
7. Retell a story with a logical sequence of events.
8. Read poetry and folk tales.
9. Experience ethnic literature.
10. Write a paraphrase of a preread story.

Level III, Grades 5-6: The student needs to:

1. Demonstrate a 70% performance level on objectives stated for preceding level (Level II).
2. Participate and communicate orally in situations such as book reports, discussions, group reports, giving directions, and vocabulary study.
3. Use embedding transformations to produce well formed sentences.
4. Gather and logically organize information.
5. Recount in oral or written discourse folk tales, fables, and myths.
6. Use the dictionary.
7. Use the encyclopedia for information gathering.
8. Use prefixes, suffixes, and root words to expand vocabulary.
9. Recognize a sentence as consisting of a noun phrase and a verb phrase ($S \rightarrow NP + VP$) or a subject and a predicate.
10. Write sentences in connected discourse to form paragraphs.

Level IV, Grade 7-8: The student needs to:

1. Demonstrate a 70% performance level on objectives stated for preceding level (Level III).
2. Write and speak nouns, pronouns, verbs, objectives, and adverbs with their proper word forms and markers.
3. Use prepositions and prepositional phrases to add content to sentences.
4. Write subject-verb agreements.
5. Compound and embed sentences to form compound and complex sentences.

6. Spell words using rules of English orthography.
7. Write creatively on topics of interest to students.
8. Speak so that ideas are accurately and logically presented.
9. Select the central idea of written or oral discourse.
10. Separate factual from judgmental statements.

Level V, Grades 9-10: The student needs to:

1. Demonstrate a 70% performance level on objectives stated for preceding level (Level IV).
2. Spell a list of useful words at a 70% performance level.
3. Read materials written at this level at a 70-80% comprehension level.
4. Write a written communication which derives at least a C grade from three experienced and peer graders.
5. Speak an oral communication which derives at least a C grade from three experienced and peer graders.
6. Read three novels from the American, the British, and other ethnic experiences.
7. Identify propoganda, entertainment, and education features of mass media (press, TV, cinema, etc.).
8. Respond to independent reading.
9. Read career oriented discourse.
10. Demonstrate efficiency in basic communications situations such as letter writing, telephone conversation, information gathering, and vocabulary development.

Level VI, Grades 11-12: The students need to:

1. Demonstrate a 70% performance level on objectives stated for preceding level (Level V).
2. Select an English curriculum appropriate to his life goal orientation, e.g., academic, vocational-technical, business, and general.
3. Perform transformations, deletions, and embeddings in generating written sentences.
4. Analyze a written text to determine its content.
5. Demonstrate a 70% comprehension of vocabulary words from a useful vocabulary building list.
6. Identify themes in literature.
7. Respond to works from American, British, and ethnic literature.
8. Demonstrate a knowledge of themes in literature.
9. Write in the forms of the journal and the essay.
10. Participate in large and small group discussions.
11. Read a passage from literature for oral interpretation.
12. Participate as a member of a debate team and/or a forum.
13. Assume the role of a character from fiction or from real life.
14. Record and critically interpret a video tape.
15. Trace themes in literature which parallel history.
16. Demonstrate cultural growth and understanding.

Determining and Developing Objectives - A close look at needs at each level will indicate they contain elements of repetition, excessiveness, and triviality. Not all of the needs will be developed into objectives. Some needs might not be suited to the level; they might not lend themselves to the type of cognitive and skill instruction being discussed here; or they might be trivial. Teachers and consultants will need to thrash out and to sort out a sequence of needs appropriate to each level of instruction, and from this point, develop sets of objectives around concepts or themes.

Objectives in a competency based English curriculum are classified as cognitive and skill objectives, remembering that the competency based portion of the curriculum is, at the most, only about two-thirds of the total curriculum. The affective objectives are the remaining third of the curriculum--supervised, through small group activity, by the teacher. Cognitive objectives include (a) concepts, (b) instructional processes, and (c) evaluative processes. Behavioral (skill) objectives include (a) behavioral skills and (b) cognitive manipulations. Affective objectives include (a) attitudinal changes, (b) opinions expressed, and (c) motivational changes.

Developing Test Items for Objectives - The acid test of a good objective is to be able to write test items for that objective before the learning activities are developed. A set of such test items can also be used as a pretest to determine whether or not students already know the material. If such is the case, then the objective is not useful for that level. For the purpose of individualized instruction, the multiple choice type of questions best suits the purpose. Here is a set of Level V, high school concept and skill objectives and their accompanying test items:

LISTENING--Intonation

Concept objectives:

The students will be able to identify the three features of intonation.

Sample test item:

That quality of speech, intonation, includes all except which of the following features:

a. alliteration
b. stress
c. pitch
d. juncture

LITERATURE--Realism, Expressionism

Skill objective: #1

Describe how the presence of the Stage Manager in "Our Town" is consistent with the character elements of the expressionistic mode of drama.

Sample test item:

The difference in the way the author, T. Wilder, delineates the Stage Manager in "Our Town" from the other characters is:

a. by what they say about themselves to other characters
b. by what the author says about the character
c. by what the character says to the audience
d. by what the other characters say about the character

LANGUAGE

Concept objective:

The students will be able to recognize sentences utilizing commas to set off words in direct address.

Sample test item:

In which sentence is the speaker being derogatory to the person he is addressing?

a. Dope Harry, and George will be upset.
b. Dope, Harry and George will be upset.
c. Dope, Harry, and George will be upset.

SPEAKING--Group Discussion

Concept objective:

The students will be able to arrange the stages of group dis ussion in solving a problem.

Sample test item:

Of the following steps of group discussion use numbers 1 through 5, one signifying the first step, and 5 the final step, to show the workable pattern to solve a problem.

_____ formulate and consider possible solutions
_____ state the problem in exact terms
_____ analyze date
_____ select the best solution
_____ collect pertinent data

WRITING--Thematic and Expository Writing

Skill objective: #1

The students will be able to order an argumentative paragraph.

Sample test item:

The following sentences compose a complete paragraph. In the space preceding each line mark each line in numerical order (1, 2, 3, 4) with line 1 being the introductory sentence.

_____ Many Europeans think we do not.
_____ The ordinary American reads cheap literature, mostly from magazines and condensed books--goes not to plays but to movies, usually solely for the sake of "seeing a show" and listens to either "juke box" music of simple strains to folk music.
_____ In America, we have a high standard of living and abundant opportunity, but do we have an appreciation of literature?
_____ Relatively few Americans read great books, see great plays or listen to great music.

Figure 2 illustrates a strategy for obtaining the needs and objectives for A COMPETENCY BASED ENGLISH CURRICULUM, K-12.

Developing and Evaluating Instructional Materials - Once the objectives and the test items are written, the development and evaluation of these instructional materials will be easy for most teachers. Exemplory instructional materials are available in an abundance of prewritten text materials. No longer will one single "class set" of texts be needed. Some texts might prove inadequate to meet the objectives of this curriculum. Before the finished individualized Learning Activity Packets (LAP) are assembled for inclusion in the completed curriculum at any one level, they should be evaluated by at least three teachers on three different groups of children or students. This type of formative evaluation will assure a usable product.

A Competency Based English Curriculum Guide - A Competency Based English Curriculum Guide will take from two to three years for a dedicated team of teachers in a district to develop. They will need constant assistance and encouragement from their administration and one or more consultants and specialists in English and reading curriculum. The following are the components of such a curriculum guide:

1. There will be one guide for each of the following levels:

   Level I, Grades K-2
   Level II, Grades 3-4
   Level III, Grades 5-6
   Level IV, Grades 7-8
   Level V, Grades 9-10
   Level VI, Grades 11-12

2. There will be an Explanatory Statement at the beginning of each guide level which contains the following information:

   a. A definition and rationale for teaching the English, reading, and communication skills.

   b. The diverse and basic needs of students in the _____ School District.

      (1) Vocational needs
      (2) Academic needs
      (3) Social and cultural needs.

   c. Some broad goals for the expected student performance upon leaving the district. What would be a minimal performance level expected of an average, literate, high school educated student from the _____ School District (exit behavior described in broad terms)?

   d. A description of a Competency Based English and Communicatons Curriculum.

      (1) It provides for individual language abilities and development for students.
      (2) It provides for individual vocational academic, and cultural needs and interests of students
      (3) It assures that specific skills and knowledge are obtained by each individual as he progresses from level to level.
      (4) It provides individualized learning activities for each student.
      (5) It provides an enter and an exit test at each level to assure the teachers and students that at least 70% mastery level at each level.
      (6) It provides for diagnosis so that students can review skills and knowledge of materials at a lower level if mastery has not been at a satisfactory level.
      (7) It provides times and facilities for teacher and student to work creatively in an open-classroom setting on useful and thoughtful communications tasks in the area of language, literature, and composition involving listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

3. The body of each guide at a level will be unique and will contain the following:

   a. A statement of specific English, reading, and communications needs of students at that grade and age level. These needs should reflect the average language development of children and students at the particular level.

   b. A statement of broad objectives for each level. These should be selective and represent skills as well as concepts. They should cover language, literature, and composition and include communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media.

   c. A sample entrance and exit test for each level.

      (1) Both the entrance and exit test should be the same except for slight changes in the items. They are a form A and B of the same test.
      (2) The items are obtained from the specific objective.

   d. The sample objective, activity, test item for each level. This section should grow and change from year to year.

   e. Samples of individualized Learning Activity Packets for each level. This section should grow and change from year to year.

   f. Suggested outline for mini-courses, open-classroom activities, and creative learning activites. This section would include such items as activities for groups, learning centers, units, and mini-courses and can suggest audio-visual, literature, and writing activities. This section should grow and change from year to year.

   g. Bibloigraphy of teacher references, student textbooks, literature, and audio-visual materials. This section should grow and change from year to year.

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Figure 1

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF A COMPETENCY BASED ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATIONS CURRICULUM, GRADES K-12

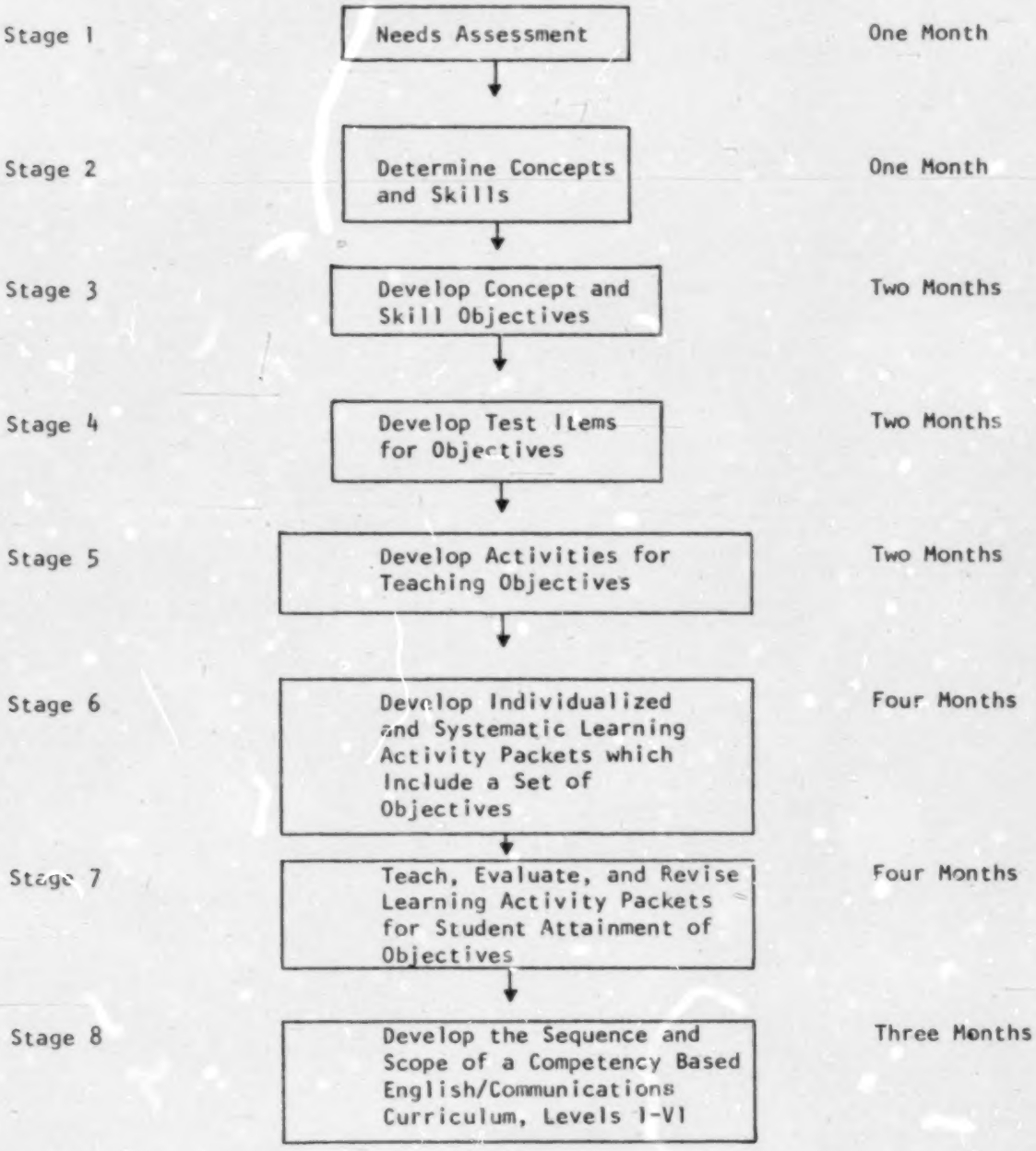

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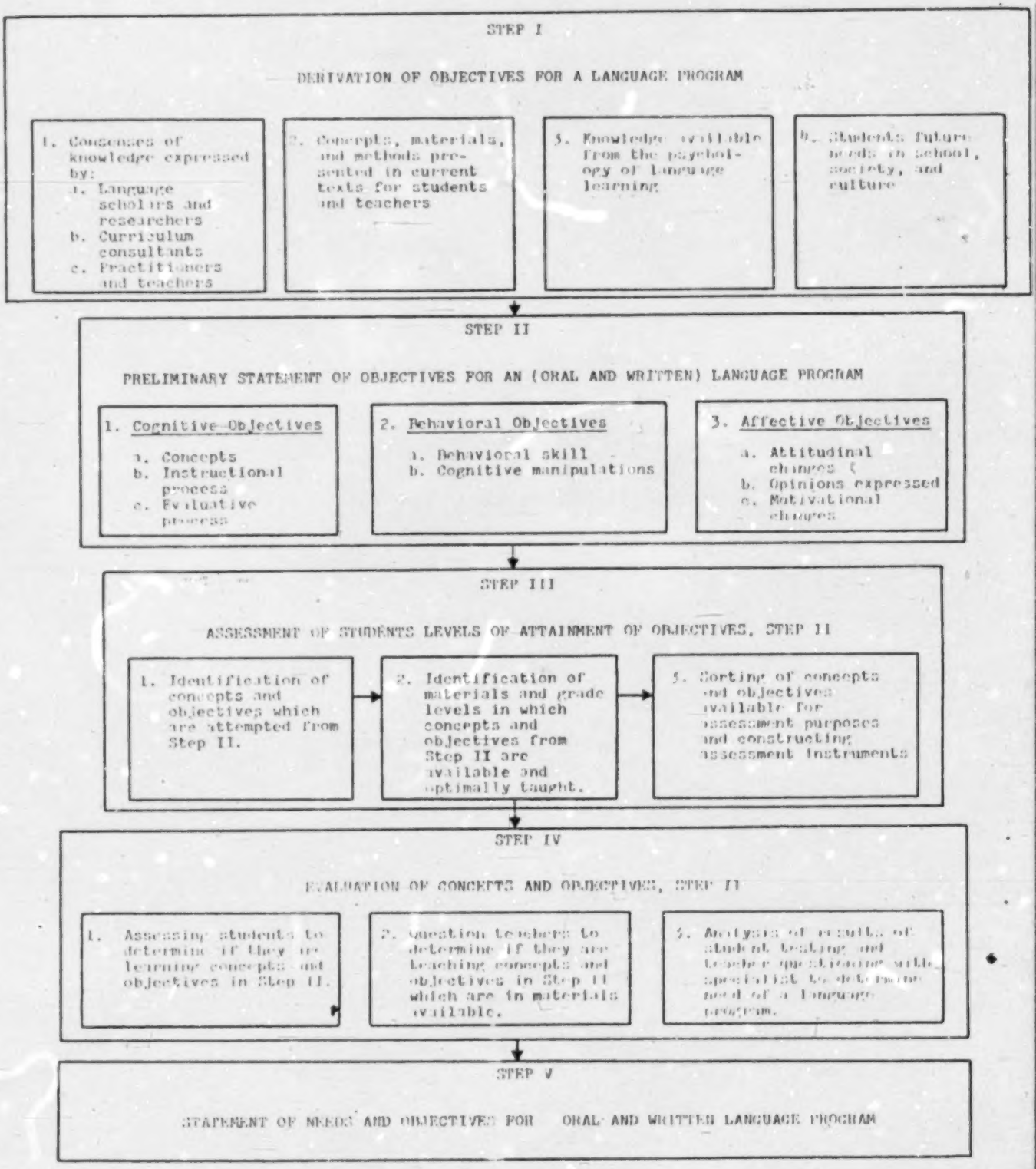
FIGURE 2

A Strategy for Obtaining the Needs and Objectives for a Competency Based English Curriculum, Grades K-12

Stages 1, 2, 3, and 4


STEP I
DERIVATION OF OBJECTIVES FOR A LANGUAGE PROGRAM
1. Consensus of knowledge expressed by:
a. Language scholars and researchers
b. Curriculum consultants
c. Practitioners and teachers
2. Concepts, materials, and methods presented in current texts for students and teachers
3. Knowledge available from the psychology of language learning
4. Students future needs in school, society, and culture
STEP II
PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES FOR AN (ORAL AND WRITTEN) LANGUAGE PROGRAM
1. Cognitive Objectives
a. Concepts
b. Instructional process
c. Evaluative process
2. Behavioral Objectives
a. Behavioral skill
b. Cognitive manipulations
3. Affective Objectives
a. Attitudinal changes
b. Opinions expressed
c. Motivational changes
STEP III
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS LEVELS OF ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES, STEP II
1. Identification of concepts and objectives which are attempted from Step II.
2. Identification of materials and grade levels in which concepts and objectives from Step II are available and optimally taught.
3. Sorting of concepts and objectives available for assessment purposes and constructing assessment instruments
STEP IV
EVALUATION OF CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES, STEP II
1. Assessing students to determine if they are learning concepts and objectives in Step II.
2. Question teachers to determine if they are teaching concepts and objectives in Step II which are in materials available.
3. Analysis of results of student testing and teacher questionnaire with specialist to determine need of a language program.
STEP V
STATEMENT OF NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE PROGRAM